

# My Jigsaw Piece Won't Fit

By

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Finding the best-learning environment for your child is like putting a jigsaw puzzle together. Either the pieces fit or they do not, not even if one applies force, pressure, hope or desire.

The shared thought that a majority of parents have is that “most schools are good enough.” If parents feel that they want more, they normally turn to the independent school system. However, state or independent, there is one question to be asked, “is the environment good enough for my child?” When answering such a question, there are a number of factors that need to be taken into account.

Firstly, it is parental responsibility to truly know and be aware of your child's interests and their personality. Choosing a learning environment for your child that fits with their personality is fundamental in bringing out the best of their abilities.

A child who is active and energetic will obviously find adjusting to a quiet, controlled environment difficult. This does not mean that your child is unable to learn – it just indicates that they need a different learning environment. For example, last year a 7 year old boy that I know, was told that he was lazy and was not capable of working properly at his school. However, his parents made the decision to change his learning environment and as a result, by placing him in a different setting, this brought out his mathematical potential and he is now working ahead of his own age group.

Secondly, a learning environment is easily soured by poor recognition from teachers. Most children thrive on positive praise; some need an abundance of praise. If a teacher is unable to recognise the individual needs of children, then almost certainly there will be children in this environment that will not achieve their true potential. In today's current educational climate, many excellent teachers are over stretched or restricted by regulations. In addition, more so than ever before, we see that class size and the ability of the teacher is crucial to an individual's learning.

Thirdly, children do grow up and with this, they evolve. The jigsaw fit that was just perfect when your child was four may not be right when your child turns six. The jigsaw piece is individual; it belongs to only one child. One child's learning environment may need to be different to their friends and even their siblings. It may even be vastly different to yours.

When choosing a learning environment, do so in tango with your child's individual development. In the UK, nearly all children go to school, but they don't have to. In fact, the law states that parents must see that their children are properly educated, but it leaves them the choice of how to do it.

Children have a right to receive an education and it is your right as a parent to choose how you will provide your child with learning opportunities. Therefore, if you feel that your child is just not ready to start nursery, then don't feel pressured into making the decision, when there are other alternatives. One such alternative is to find a smaller group that offers nursery learning but in a less "school-oriented" way.

The same applies for starting school. The magic age of five goes hand in hand, with "now you are school age." A child's chronological age does not have to mean that they must attend full time school. Nor does school attendance ensure that they will achieve their true academic potential.

As parents, don't be afraid to question your gut feelings. So many parents admit that they wanted to give their children more time at home, more time to be with their family and most importantly, more time to be themselves. Current educational pressures and competition between peers make us neglect our individual instincts. If we neglect our individuality then we will neglect our children's individuality.

Melissa Carter is a qualified teacher and child therapist. Her 15 years of experience gained through Montessori, Waldorf-Steiner, State, Independent and International schools has led her to open her own educational practice called Bloo House, which she manages with her partner.

Bloo House aims to provide a balance for families who are listening to their gut instinct and more importantly who have made the decision to find an alternative way to provide a learning environment for their children. We offer afternoon nursery sessions in a non-directive environment. Following on from this we offer a learning environment for 5 to 10 year olds that enable children to be taught Maths, English, Science and Philosophy over a 4 hour day, 4 days a week. More importantly, our teachers teach your child. We don't expect your puzzle piece to fit our jigsaw; we also don't have round holes for square pegs. We acknowledge individuality and our children thrive.